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FALL OF GILEAD

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IN A WORLD THAT HAS MOVED ON...

Earning the title of gunslinger at the unheard-of age of fourteen, young Roland Deschain quickly became a target for his father's enemies, namely John Farson, and was forced to flee his home of Gilead or face death.

Roland and his ka-tet returned home to Gilead after he barely survived his first nearly fatal experience with Farson's greatest prize: the sphere known as Maerlyn's Grapefruit. Still under the mentally destructive influence of the sphere, Roland kept it hidden from his father Steven until his ka-tet forced him to reveal it. Wisely, Steven locked it away so it could harm no one.

As Gilead prepared for the festive celebration of its newly-titled gunslingers, Roland's mother prepared to repent for her adulterous sins with the sorcerer Marten. Seemingly out of nowhere, Marten appeared and lured Gabrielle into becoming the prime element in the planned assassination of her husband Steven with the help of Farson's spy. Distrustful of his returned mother, Roland left the festivities to find the sphere hidden away in her chambers. The sphere drew him into a hallucination that provoked him into fatally shooting Gabrielle...

Meanwhile, Steven Deschain has discovered his wife's treachery and heads to his chambers where he sees that Maerlyn's Grapefruit is gone from his safe. And the only person who was close enough to Steven to take the key was Gabrielle Deschain.

*[It would've been so easy
for Roland at that moment.
"Who did this?" his father
asked.]*

*So easy to say, "I found
her like this! My hands are
drenched in red because I
tried to stop her from
bleeding out long enough
to name her killer!"*

*"It was not me,
father! It was
anyone but me!"*

*Couldn't say if it
went through his
mind, 'cause Roland
is guarded in his
thoughts.*



He stands there, stares at the corpse of her what gave him birth. His father calls his name like he's witnessing his son drowning, going down for the final time.

But finally--after what probably seemed an eternity to him--he speaks.

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But finally--after what probably seemed an eternity to him--he speaks.

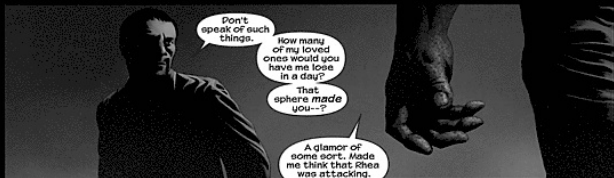


I did it.

Well... 'twas
the hand of Farson,
or Marten or his
pet witch, Rhea...

...reaching
through that
damnable Maerlyn's
Grapefruit into
Gilead... in my
mind...

But my hand
pulled the trigger.
So if you seek an
assassin to hang,
I stand before
you--



Don't
speak of such
things.

How many
of my loved
ones would you
have me lose
in a day?

That
sphere made
you--?

A glamor of
some sort. Made
me think that Rhea
was attacking.



You could
easily have denied
any involvement.
That weighs in your
favor somewhat.

But proving
the grapefruit's
potency to anyone
else is problematic
without the
sphere in our
possession.

Yet here,
upon Gabrielle's
dresser... the key
to the vault in which
I kept the sphere.
It would seem
to... to...



Emotion choked
off his voice. I'll
warrant he's holding
himself together
with both hands,
and he's starting
to leak through
his own fingers.

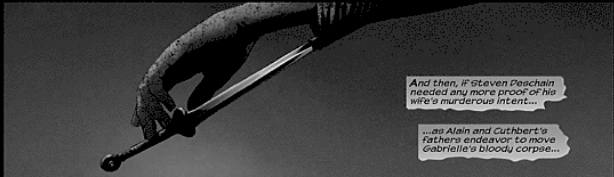
Alain, Cuthbert
and Aileen look
on at their friend
and friend's father.
They likely never
felt more helpless
than right then.



Robert...Chris...
no matter what else
she is, she remains
my queen. I cannot
bear for strangers
to...to...

Say no
more, Steven.
We will attend
to her...

Her
remains.



And then, if Steven Deschain
needed any more proof of his
wife's murderous intent...

...as Alain and Cuthbert's
fathers endeavor to move
Gabrielle's bloody corpse...



A
knife? Steven...
she...

She had a
knife up her
sleeve?

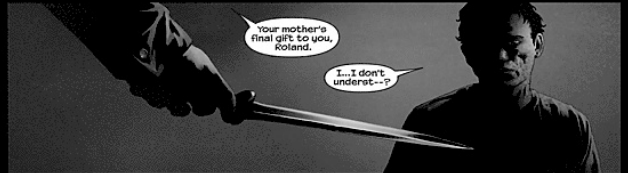
For self-
protection,
surely...



His tone is cold
and flat and even
more lifeless than
his queen.

A knife with Farrow's
sigil emblazoned upon it.
It would seem that what she
intended to protect was the
Good Man's interests...

Probably
by slipping this
between my ribs.



Your mother's
final gift to you,
Roland.

I...I don't
underst--p



From beyond the
grave, she convinces
me of your story.

Farson plays us
against each other.
His wizard, Marten,
had my wife betray
me...and then Farson
sacrificed Gabrielle
to turn me against
you. He is a master
gamesman.

And now
we must play
through our
own game. A
game of law
that we must
hope will see
the truth,
with *you*
caught in its
rules.

I understand,
father. There
cannot be one
law for gunslingers
and another for
the rest of
Gilead.



Guarda...take
my son into
custody.



you want to cry out in
protest, Aileen. You want
to run to him.

Yes, Bert...

I...

If you fancy
yourself to have
the heart of a
gunslinger...

Then exercise
the *control* of
a gunslinger. Help
him when you can...
but this is *not*
that time.



My lord!
Shun! Shun!
Something
has...

It is...
impossible!
I can
scarcely--

Calm yourself.
Nothing is to be
served by your
collapsing.

"A raven was seen flying from the castle, hauling a velvet sack. The north tower guard, suspicious, attempted to shoot it from the sky..."

"...and was struck down by a bolt of lightning."



"While medics sought to revive him-- unsuccessfully-- three men rode through the western checkpoint. None could even slow them."

"One fit the description of Marten Broadcloak..."

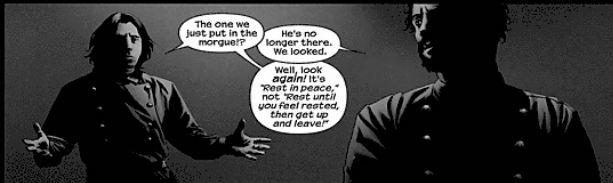
"...and another could well have been the traitorous musician."

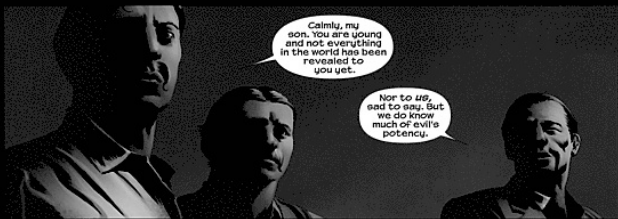


"The one we just put in the morgue!?"

"He's no longer there. We looked."

"Well, look again! It's 'Rest in peace,' not 'Rest until you feel rested, then get up and leave!'"







Aye.
It sure
is.



The raven
could have been
Marten's *familiar*,
making off with the
grapefruit...

Or perhaps even
a transformed
Marten himself,
who secured the
grapefruit and
then returned
to liberate the
"corpse."



Either way, he
couldn't be a
far enough
distance yet to
be safe from
pursuit.

Then,
gentlemen...



...let
us pursue
him.

As the gunslingers prepare their posse,
over in Cort's cottage, well...

Ever feel so sick ya
wish you was dead?
Well, Cort's pretty
much at that point.
Unfortunately, it's
likely his wish'll be
granted.



Your vomiting patient, my dear PeCurry,
is an idiot. I warned him not to muck with
whatever he found in the traitor's room,
but did he listen?

He did
not?

You know of his
pigheadedness,
nurse?

No, Vannay,
you've just said
it three times
already.

I like your
nurse's *spunk*,
Doctor! If I
recover, I might
want to see
her socially.

If I do not,
well...it'll be
worth it for
having uncovered
Farson's plans!
His death will
avenge mine!

Stop
speaking of
death, you
old fool.

If 'tis mine,
I've earned it,
Vannay, and will
speak of it
when I wish.

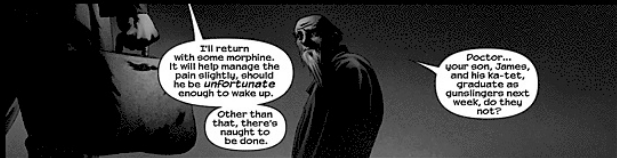




That's
for the
best.

His skin will continue
to seep blood, faster
and faster, until he
has none left
to lose.

*Pamn you,
Marten! This
business has
your stink
about it!*



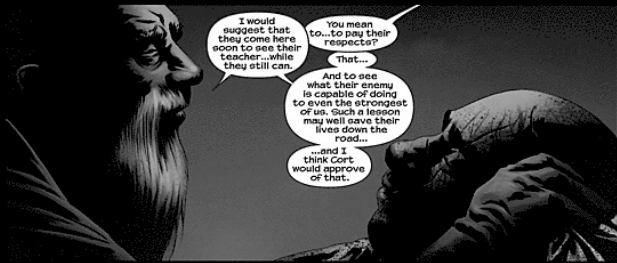
I'll return
with some morphine.
It will help manage the
pain slightly, should
he be *unfortunate*
enough to wake up.

Other than
that, there's
naught to
be done.

Doctor...
your son, James,
and his ka-tet,
graduate as
gunslings next
week, do they
not?



Yes.
What of
it?



I would
suggest that
they come here
soon to see their
teacher...while
they still can.

You mean
to...to pay their
respects?

That...

And to see
what their enemy
is capable of doing
to even the strongest
of us. Such a lesson
may well save their
lives down the
road...

...and I
think Cort
would approve
of that.



Well, well,
well...

And what
have we
here?

We have
Gheemie. Well...
wait... *Gheemie*
has Gheemie. I think.
Gheemie thinks. So
much thinking...still
not used to it...

Gheemie...
I...

It comes and
goes. There's so
much rattling around
in my head, I'm not
sure who I am or how
I'm supposed to
be anymore.

What do
you *want*,
boy?

Right.
Yes. Good
question.



Roland. Roland,
Guthbert and Alain.
They had different
names when I met
them.

But whoever
I am *now*...that's
who *they* are now.
Understand?

Not
remotely.
Now be on
your way.







Do you two
have any idea
how much trouble
I can get into
for this?



As much trouble as you'll
get into if I tell your beloved
Marguerite what I spotted
you doing with--?



You're a
cruel man,
Johns.

Make it
quick. I'll keep
a lookout for
the warden.



I appreciate
the gesture, my
friends, but you
shouldn't be here.
You need no
further guilt by
association...



You're guilty of
nothing,
Roland.



Further
evidence has
been found to
implicate Marten.
There is little
doubt that he
tricked you into
shooting your
mother...



Tricked or not,
I *did* shoot her. Her
blood remains on my
hands, in *every*
sense.

And if I'd
listened to you,
I'd have had nothing
to do with that globe,
and he never could
have infested my
mind.



*My negligence--
my hubris, if nothing
else--is criminal. And
my actions are an
extension of that.*

When I hang,
as the treacherous
Hax did so many years
ago, it will be
deserved.



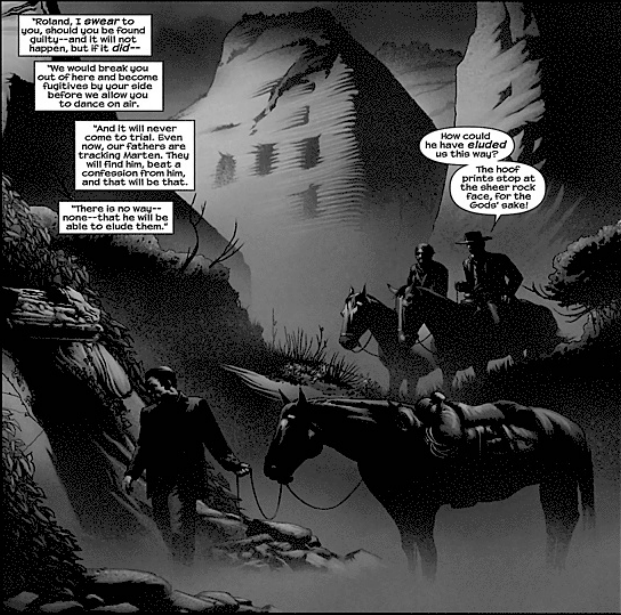
You're
being ridiculous,
Roland. It will
never happen.



Just promise
me this. When the
time comes...*you* be
the ones to do it. Let
my *friends* send me
on to the next
world.



If nothing
else, Bert, I can
count on you to
fashion the knot
properly. You
always excelled
at knots.



"Roland, I *swear* to you, should you be found guilty--and it will not happen, but if it *did*--

"We would break you out of here and become fugitives by your side before we allow you to dance on air.

"And it will never come to trial. Even now, our fathers are tracking Marten. They will find him, beat a confession from him, and that will be that.

"There is no way--none--that he will be able to elude them."

How could he have *eluded* us this way?

The hoof prints stop at the sheer rock face, for the Gods' sake!



Not sheer. There seems to be some sort of door.

A door, embedded in a rock wall! More of Marten's doing, I'll wager.



With respect, Steven, I think you'd lose that wager. Our mistake is in thinking this to be a naturally made mountain.

These rocks...bits of debris...I think they're actually rubble. This is a fallen city, overgrown in the midst of the forest.

A city? Who lived here?



Back then? Before the fall of the Imperium? Who cares? But now? Slow mutants, most probably. Watching us right now, for all we know, or rooting around in tunnels beneath our feet.

This business stinks of a trap.

We need to be quit of this area, or at least return during daylight, lest--



FWIP



Wait, Chris. Steven...did you two hear something?



**BLOODY
HELL!!!**



*These ain't the first people
that the Slow Mutants have
ambushed.*

*Thing is, everybody
they've ever attacked
ran and screamed
and begged and died.*



*But the gunslingers...
they're in the business
of dealing death.*

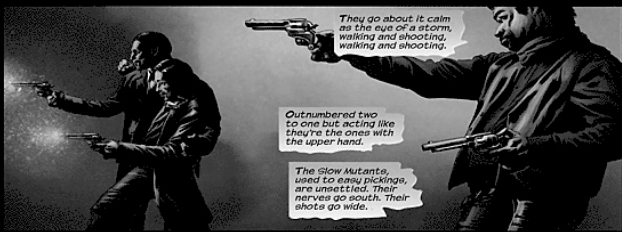
*So for them,
this is just
another day
at work.*



*They go about it calm
as the eye of a storm,
walking and shooting,
walking and shooting.*

*Outnumbered two
to one but acting like
they're the ones with
the upper hand.*

*The Slow Mutants,
used to easy pickings,
are unsettled. Their
nerves go south. Their
shots go wide.*



*Their lives go
away.*

*All of them...
except one.*



Unfortunately, one's
all it takes.

BLAM

That one was
still twitching.
Could have been
death spasms,
though.

I'll scout
the area,
make sure
that--

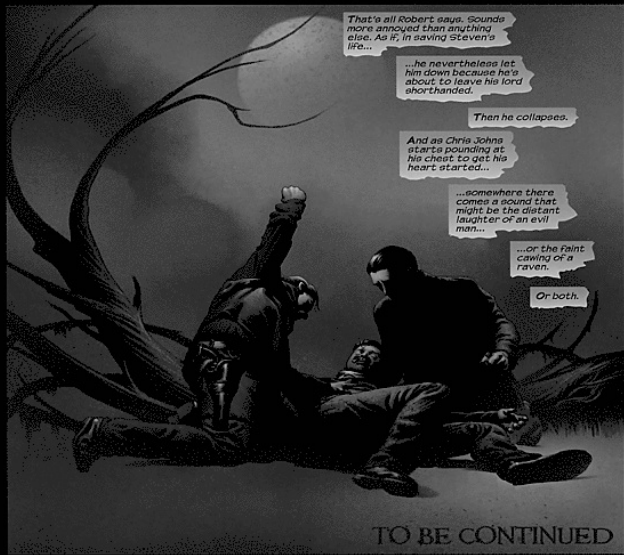
PFFFT

Steven,
DOWN!

BLAM



Oh...
...damnation.



That's all Robert says. Sounds more annoyed than anything else. As if, in saving Steven's life...

...he nevertheless let him down because he's about to leave his lord short-handed.

Then he collapses.

And as Chris Johns starts pounding at his chest to get his heart started...

...somewhere there comes a sound that might be the distant laughter of an evil man...

...or the faint cawing of a raven.

Or both.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE ART AND DISCIPLINE OF CREATIVE CONTINUITY

Each time I sit down to write out the plot for a Dark Tower comic book, I'm faced with two urgent tasks. On the one hand, I need to create a story that is new and (hopefully!) full of enough enjoyable surprises to keep even the most hardened Dark Tower junkie traveling with us. On the other hand, I must also remain true to Stephen King's original vision. As all Constant Readers know, in *The Gunslinger Born* I had the storyline of Wizard and Glass to follow and so was on fairly safe ground on both accounts. But as our tale progresses and as our tet moves further and

further from Hambry and closer and closer to its final confrontation with the Outer Dark, these two imperatives become a little trickier to juggle.

In numerous interviews and articles, I've discussed how I create the Dark Tower story from the many fragmentary tales which Roland confides to his American tet over the course of Stephen King's seven volume saga. But what I haven't talked about very much is the way in which I assemble these individual tales. Sometimes, the transition from novel to graphic novel is clean and direct and I jump for joy. But most of the time, even those scenes which seem to be taken whole from the novel must be transformed in order to work in the new visual context. In essence, my job always seems to be less that of assembling a jigsaw puzzle—where the full picture is already waiting for me and all I have to do is put the pieces in the appropriate places—but more like recreating an ancient mosaic from beautiful, multi-colored tiles. What often happens is that, in order





to stand and be true to the spirit of Stephen King's tale which is full of wonderful plotting and powerful dramatic tension, I have to play a little fast and loose with rigid facts. Although this may occasionally fash hardcore fans, I cry your pardon. I am doing the best I can to remember the faces of my fathers.

Here's an example to illustrate what I mean. Because of the extremely powerful flashback in *Wizard and Glass* that shows Roland shooting his mother Gabrielle in the chest, I knew the time and method by which Gabrielle was doomed to travel to the clearing. I also knew that Roland would be tricked into committing matricide by a vision he sees in Maerlyn's Grapefruit. (Standing in his mother's chamber and staring into the Pink sphere, Roland thinks that Rhea of the Coös is sneaking up behind him, her snake in her hands. Unfortunately for him, the woman approaching him from behind is actually his mother, holding the belt that she made for him while in a women's retreat in Debaria.) However, while the essence of this scene remains the same in both graphic novel and original prose, in *Wizard and Glass* and

Treachery, the context of this scene is quite different.

In our graphic novel version, Gabrielle's death happens almost immediately after the riddling contest that follows Roland's coming-of-age banquet. Cort has murdered the cheater who claims the Fair Day goose, but while searching the man's pocket he finds incriminating evidence—a ring stamped with the staring red eye of the Crimson King, a symbol which also happens to be the sigil of John Farson. Holding the ring aloft, Cort states that there are other traitors in Gilead. In response, guilty Gabrielle flees the Great Hall, a flight which is witnessed by her son. Knowing of his mother's past infidelities, and of her devotion to the traitor Marten Broadcloak, Roland becomes suspicious and follows her to her chamber. The tragic result of his pursuit is a foregone conclusion.

However, in the original novel, this awful matricide takes place under quite different circumstances. First of all, it does not happen on the night of Roland's coming-of-age banquet, but many months later. In Stephen King's version of the tale, Roland comes to his mother not as an angry and suspi-

cious boy trying to root out a traitor, but as a conciliator and peacemaker. In that brief flashback, we learn that on the night of Roland's coming-of-age banquet, Gabrielle was supposed to stab her husband in the chest with a poisoned dagger. However, Roland somehow or other managed to intercept the weapon, and by so doing, prevented his mother from committing a crime for which she would probably have been hanged. When Roland knocks on his mother's door, he does not already suspect that she has stolen the Grapefruit for her treacherous lover. Instead, Roland comes to ask his mother to repent of her affair with Marten Broadcloak once and for all, and to return his father's love. Alas, Roland is not only disappointed in this task, but his good intentions are twisted by his enemies.

Another example of this condensing process can be found in the character of Farson's nephew, James Farson. (And by the way, in the books we never learn this nasty young man's first name. I borrowed the name James from *The Little Sisters of Eluria*, a Dark Tower novella which I will discuss shortly.) In *The Wastelands*, Roland tells us that Cort once murdered a wandering, cross-eyed singer and acrobat who dared to cheat during one of Gilead's sacred Fair-Day Riddling contests. Instead of taking home the Fair-Day Goose as he'd planned, this unfortunate trickster ended up lying in the dirt, Cort's dagger in his chest. This event did not necessarily happen during Roland's coming-of-age feast, though we can assume (given the importance of Riddling contests during Gilead's major festivals) that it could have. And as far as we know, the wandering singer and minstrel whom Cort killed was not Farson's nephew at all, but an unnamed and unimportant person.

However, as always, I try my best to ground my stories in the energies of Stephen King's novels. In *Wizard and Glass*, we do learn that Farson's nephew once sneaked into Gilead dressed

as a wandering musician. His job was to smuggle a poisoned knife to the castle's chief of domestic staff, and this treacherous servant was charged with delivering the weapon to Gabrielle. As you can see, I had to conflate two characters and several different scenes in order to create the fateful night of Roland's coming-of-age banquet, but my hope in so doing was to fit more of Stephen King's vision into our tale, rather than less.

But merging scenes and characters is not my only means of dealing with sections of our story that are not detailed in our beloved books. Occasionally I am thrown back completely upon my own resources, since as all fans of the original novels know, Roland is too busy battling enemies to explain every detail of his past life to his new traveling companions. In such circumstances, I still keep my two main objectives in mind. I just have to approach them via a slightly different route.

Although scenes such as the resurrection of James Farson, or the mutants ambushing Steven Deschain, Robert Allgood, and Chris Johns, do not take place in the original novels, each one is based upon a theme or adventure that happens in one or more of the books, or in one of the Dark Tower-related novels. Hence, though Roland never recounts these particular adventures, they all are ultimately inspired by Stephen King's imagination and his world.

For example, let's examine the resurrection of James Farson, a scene which is shown in full in *The Sorcerer*, but discussed in *Fall of Gilead*. Once I'd made the decision to have Cort kill Farson's nephew (albeit unwittingly, since he never learns the young man's true name), I faced a crossroads. Given the Good Man's past record of murder and mayhem, I was fairly certain that Farson would attack Gilead if he knew that his nephew had been slaughtered there, but I also knew (from the books) that much more had to happen in Gilead before any such attack could



take place. And so I hit upon an idea. In *The Gunslinger* we learned that Walter can raise the dead, so couldn't he enact that same magical feat in our comics? And if Walter did manage to resurrect a corpse, it would not only be an interesting plot twist, but it would also show new readers a little more about the amazing extent of Walter's powers. Once again, my prime directives were fulfilled, and so I ran with the idea.

When it came to the mutants ambushing Steven Deschain and his ka-tet, I struggled for a long time about whether or not to include the adventure. After all, though we know that the ruins of Gilead will eventually house a nest of Slow Mutants, we don't ever discover when that process takes place. In the end I decided in favor of the scene, in large part because I felt that having Slow Mutants creeping into Gilead foreshadowed something that long-time readers of the series knew was bound to happen. It also meant I could adapt a fight which had long been among my favorites. Namely, the opening section of *The Little Sisters of Eluria*, where Roland is attacked by a band of Slow Mutants known as the Green Folk.

When Richard asked me to describe the mutants that ambush Steven and

his tet, I pointed out this scene to him. I used these particular mutants in our tale since I needed them to be clever enough to use weapons, and since they, like the Rods that we meet in Volume VII of the novels, are some of the few that still have working minds, not just raging appetites. But unlike the Rods of Volume VII, who are loyal to the descendants of Eld, the Green Folk of Eluria have strong ties to the servants of the Outer Dark. Hence, they could easily do the bidding of Walter O'Dim. (And by the way, I told Richard that these variations on the Green Folk didn't have to be green.) In order to strengthen these mutants' ties with Walter, I armed them with poisonous darts rather than the clubs used by the original Green Folk. For as every fan of *The Eyes of the Dragon* knows, Walter's alter-ego, Randall Flagg, is an adept at the use of poisons, and curare—which paralyzes the muscles but does not taint the body-meat—is one of his favorites.

Finally, I'd like to add a word about Aileen Ritter. Many curious fans have asked me where she appears in the books, since they have paged through all seven volumes and have not been able to find her. I admit that she is difficult to find, but she is most definitely there. In the



1982 version of *The Gunslinger*, we're told that Aileen was Roland's second important lover. He became intimate with her after his return from Hambry and before Gilead fell to its enemies. However in the revised 2003 version of this novel, Aileen becomes merely Roland's dancing companion and the girl his father wants him to marry, not the great love of his life. In our comics, I borrowed a little bit from each version of Aileen. As for Aileen's relationship to Cort, and as for her aspiration to be a gunslinger, they are my additions. However, as always, these decisions were ultimately based on my desire to stand and be true. In the novels, Roland has one female gunslinger-companion, and her energy is

central to the books. Since in Gilead it was forbidden for a woman to train in the arts of war, I had to find a way for a woman to be exposed to those arts, and so I settled on Aileen's kinship to Cort, in spirit as well as in blood.

So my fellow Constant Readers, for this month I will leave you. Thanks for taking the time to listen. From those of us here in Gilead, long days and pleasant nights.

All the best— 

Robin Furth

WRITTEN BY:
ROBIN FURTH
ILLUSTRATED BY:
DENNIS CALERO

DARK
TOWER: FALL OF
GILEAD
ISSUE #2
SKETCHBOOK

A look at the creative team's in-progress work,
including layouts, pencil art and cover concepts.



Richard Isanove's layouts with his notes.

Peter David scripts his dialog using these breakdowns of Robin Furth's plot.



CORT'S COTTAGE



CORT WIPES HIS FACE



SHEENIE



Richard Isanove's black and white artwork.
The finished versions appear earlier in this issue.













Renowned artist Tommy Lee Edwards (MARVEL 1985, WOLVERINE) provides a tense and foreboding portrait of Roland in his impressionistic variant. Seen here is his preliminary sketch.



NEXT: While the siege of Gilead begins, Cort battles the effects of Marten's poisonous book!





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